

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MILAN 0754

E.O. 11652: GDS - DECL MAY 15, 1988
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SUBJ: CARABINIERI GENERAL ON SECURITY SITUATION

REF: MILAN 0753

SUMMARY. SENIOR POLICE OFFICIAL FEARS DC ELECTION GAINS WILL
LULL IT BACK TO COMPLACENCY WHEN DETERMINED ANTI-TERRORIST
ACTION NEEDED. HE HOPES FOR STRONG MINISTER OF INTERIOR
WITH PREFECTS AS CAPO GABINETTO AND CHIEF OF POLICE WHILE
CARABINIERI GENERAL DELLA CHIESE WOULD BE RIGHT MAN TO LEAD
ANTI-TERRORIST OPERATIONS. END SUMMARY.

1. GENERAL EDOARDO PALOMBI, ITALY'S SENIOR CARABINIERI GENERAL
ABOUT TO ASSUME DUTIES AS DEPUTY COMMANDER OF ENTIRE SERVICE
IN ROME, HAS LONG BEEN A RELIABLE AND WELL INFORMED AUTHORITY
ON SECURITY SITUATION. HE HAS BEEN CONSISTENTLY PESSIMISTIC
ABOUT THE SECURITY OUTLOOK.

2. PALOMBI WAS PARADOXICALLY NOT HAPPY WITH THE ELECTIONS
RESULTS. THE DC HAD GAINED SO MUCH THAT HE FEARED THAT
IT WOULD NOW LIE BACK AND CONCLUDE THAT ITS PERFORMANCE
HAD BEEN VINDICATED BY ELECTORAL SHOWING. INSTEAD, PALOMBI
ARGUED, DC SHOULD REDOUBLE ITS EFFORTS TO IMPROVE. HE
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ASCRIBED DC GAIN TO PUBLIC REACTION TO TERRORISM AND TO
DESIRE FOR ORDER BUT FEAR OF PCI. IN PART IT WAS THIS
FEAR THAT PCI WOULD RESTORE ORDER WITH TOO LITTLE LATIN
FLEXIBILITY THAT EXPLAINED ITS DECLINE IN WEEK-END ELECTIONS,
HE SAID. IN PART PCI DECLINE DUE TO PCI MODERATE LINE
WHICH SOME OF ITS MILITANT FOLLOWERS DIDN'T LIKE.

3. MAIN QUESTION NOW WAS SELECTION OF NEW MINISTER OF INTERIOR. PALOMBI WANTED A POLITICAL LEADER, PREFERABLY A MAN ON THE MAKE OF MEDIUM STANDING WITH A PRIVATE INCOME WHO COULD RISK MAKING A MISTAKE. HE DISMISSED PICCOLI (WHO, IN ANY EVENT HAD DECLINED) AS HAVING NO REASON TAKE RISK OF STUBBING HIS TOE. THE CAPO GABINETTO SHOULD BE A PREFECT AND IT WAS ALSO ESSENTIAL THAT NEW POLICE CHIEF BE NAMED AND PALOMBI WANTS A PREFECT NOT A RE-TIRED MAGISTRATE LIKE INCUMBENT. AS FOR THE ANTI-TERRORIST POLICE, PALOMBI WOULD

LIKE TO SEE CARABINIERI GENERAL DALLA CHIESE NOW RESPONSIBLE FOR GUARDING HIGH SECURITY PRISONS.

4. PALOMBI, AS USUAL, WAS NOT OPTIMISTIC. HE DISDAINS POLITICIANS WHOM HE BLAMES FOR LACKING THE COURAGE AND THE FORESIGHT TO HAVE FACED THE TERRORIST THREAT AT THE OUTSET. NEW LAWS WERE NOT NEEDED AND WOULD, IN ANY CASE, BE SLOW TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE. HE HAD RECEIVED RE-INFORCEMENTS FROM ROME AND WAS NOW MAKING A SHOW OF PRESENCE ON THE STREETS OF MILAN WITH MORE CARABINIERI WALKING A BEAT, MORE SQUAD CARS MOVING, AND SO ON. THIS WAS LARGELY OPTICAL, DESIGNED TO COUNTER THE NEW SURGE OF TERRORISM. BUT PALOMBI FEARED HE WOULD LOSE HIS MEN BACK TO ROME AS SOON AS THERE WAS A FLARE-UP THERE. NEXT TO WEAK SPINED POLITICIANS, PALOMBI'S FAVORITE TARGET

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IS THE COURTS AND THE COURTS' INVESTIGATING OFFICERS WHO ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR INTERROGATING SUSPECTS. HE ARGUES, AS DO MOST OTHER EXECUTIVE BRANCH OFFICIALS WE MEET, THAT THE DENIAL OF INTERROGATION AUTHORITY TO THE POLICE AND THE POLITICAL SYMPATHY OF MANY JUDGES FOR THE FAR LEFT ARE AMONG THE MAJOR CAUSES FOR THE BREAKDOWN OF PUBLIC ORDER.

5. AS FOR THE MILAN SITUATION, PALOMBI SAID THAT HE HAD EXPECTED THE SHARP UPTURN IN VIOLENCE ONCE THE BR AND ITS ALLIES WERE FREED FROM THEIR PREOCCUPATION WITH MORO OR THE CURCIO TRIAL IN TURIN. THESE TERRORIST GROUPS COULDN'T BE IN COMBAT CONSTANTLY. THEY NEEDED TIME TO PREPARE AND RECOVER. AND THEN, THE POLICE HAD DEALT THEM SEVERAL HEAVY BLOWS LAST YEAR FROM WHICH IT HAD TAKEN TIME TO RECOVER.

6. BUT PALOMBI SAW THE TREND AS TOWARD GREATER VIOLENCE UNTIL THE GOVERNMENT BECAME EFFECTIVE ONCE MORE. IT WAS NOT THAT THE TERRORISTS WERE THAT CLEVER OR HAD SOME NEWER TECHNIQUE, THAN PAST CLANDESTINE ORGANIZATIONS. IT WAS THAT EFFECTIVENESS OF STATE TO COPE WITH IT HAD DECLINED. UNTIL THAT WEAKNESS WAS CORRECTED, ACCORDING TO

PALOMBI, COUNTRY WOULD CONTINUE TO BE ON DEFENSIVE AGAINST
BRIGATE ROSSE AND SIMILAR CLANDESTINE GROUPS. FINA

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